

Message Text

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43

ACTION SCS-03

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PARAMARIBO 0465

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SUBJ: W/W BASKETBALL TEAM

REF: STATE 242930 (NOTAL)

FORWARD AIRLINE TICKETS OF A 21 MEMBER PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL GROUP ARE BEING HELD BY C KERSTEN & CO., MANAGER OF HOTEL KRASNAPOLSKY, PARAMARIBO AGAINST PAYMENT OF HOTEL BILLS AMASSED BY THEM IN EXCESS OF DOLS 6,000.

DEBTS WERE INCURRED IN NAME OF OSSIE MASON, TEAM MANAGER, PROMOTER, AND OWNER OF ALL-AMERICAN SPORTS PRODUCTIONS, 245 E. 63 ST., NY, TEL. 212-371-9070, DURING PERIOD 26 NOVEMBER THRU 6 DECEMBER.

HOTEL COUNSEL CLAIMS RIGHT OF RETENTION OF TICKETS EXTENDS TO ALL MEMBERS OF GROUP EVEN THOUGH DEBTS INCURRED ON MASON'S SIGNATURE.

15 BASKETBALL PLAYERS AND SIX MUSICIANS HAVE PLAYED A SERIES OF GAME-SHOWS IN PARAMARIBO AND ARE SCHEDULED TO DEPART FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENTS IN TRINIDAD TODAY THURSDAY 13 DEC 1430 LOCAL. EXCURSION TICKETS EXPIRE TOMORROW.

MASON OVERESTIMATED SURINAM EXIBITION BASKETBALL MARKET, AND BAD MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING EXCLUDED BREAK EVEN STAY HERE.
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HIS BUSINESS PRACTICES ALIENATED MOST OF HIS LOCAL SYMPATHIZERS.

ON HIS ADVANCE VISIT IN EARLY NOVEMBER HE PASSED DOLS 1000 BAD CHECKS. THE HOTEL ALLOWED HIS RETURN CHECK-IN WITH GROUP HOPING CHECKS WOULD BE COVERED BY ANTICIPATED GAME RECEIPTS.

WHEN DEBTS MOUNTED MASON GROUP WAS ASKED TO LEAVE KRASNAPOLSKY BUT HOTEL HELD THE TICKETS. MASON THEN PROPOSED TO TRAVEL TO TRINIDAD TO SECURE ADVANCE ON BOOKINGS THERE TO COVER DEBTS HERE. HE AGREED THAT IF THE HOTEL WOULD LET HIM GO WITHOUT PRESSING CHARGES FOR CHECKS HE WOULD ALLOW THEM TO HOLD THE TEAM AS COLLATERAL GUARANTEEING HIS RETURN.

THE TEAM CONTINUED TO PLAY BUT COSTS AND GARNISHMENTS ON OTHER MASON DEBTS CONSUMED ALL GATES. TEAM DESPERATE WITHOUT FUNDS TO BUY FOOD. SALARIES MASON PROMISED HAVE NOT BEEN PAID. TSAM LEADERS THREATEN TO "GO GET TICKETS" IF RELIEF NOT FORTHCOMING.

MASON TELEPHONED WEDNESDAY EVENING DEC 12 THAT TEAM BOOKED IN TRINIDAD TONIGHT. ADVANCE SALES PORTEND SELLOUT.

CONSULATE GENERAL WELL INFORMED ABOUT CASE BUT NOT FORMALLY APPROACHED BY TEAM UNTIL DEC 11 WHEN MASON FAILED TO RETURN AS PROMISED. WHEN CONTACTED ON BEHALF OF TEAM, HOTEL DEMANDED ASSURANCES FROM U.S. THAT DEBTS WOULD BE PAID. VICE-CONSUL EMPHASIZED THAT WE COULD NOT ACT IN ANY FIDUCIARY CAPACITY.

FOLLOWING DISCUSSION WITH HOTEL COUNSEL POST SOLICITED GOOD OFFICES OF MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND INVESTIGATED ALTERNATE MEANS OF FINANCING TRINIDAD TRIP THROUGH PRIVATE SOURCES.

TODAY HOTEL COUNSEL AGAIN INFORMED THAT CONSULATE HAS NO LEGAL STATUS AS FIDUCIARY CHANNEL. POST SUGGESTED AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN TEAM MEMBERS AND HOTEL TO PAY SURINAM DEBTS OUT OF TRINIDAD PROCEEDS. IF HOTEL AGREES, WHICH IS LIKELY, POSSIBILITY OF RESORT TO REPATRIATION WILL DEMINISH AND TEAM WILL DEPART THIS AFTERNOON.
JOHNSTON

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